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Open letter to Journalists/Comparison of GASLAND to Nazi Propaganda by Josh Fox

## **An open letter to Journalists on the Comparison of GASLAND to Nazi Propaganda by a member of the Corbett Administration**

by GASLAND on Wednesday, March 16, 2011 at 11:13am

An open letter to Journalists on the Comparison of GASLAND to Nazi Propaganda by a member of the Corbett Administration

by Josh Fox / GASLAND

March 16, 2011

This week, Teddy Borawski, the chief oil and gas geologist for the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) and a member of Pennsylvania Governor Tom Corbett's administration, serving in an official capacity, and on the record, compared my Sundance award-winning and Oscar-nominated documentary film GASLAND to Nazi propaganda stating "Goebbels would be proud." The slander was the latest in a series of smears and misinformation about the film and character attacks on me.

This kind of hateful speech shows a contempt for history, for truth, for science and sets a dangerous precedent in our state's government. Such slanderous mudslinging has no place in any rational or adult debate on ANY topic, let alone the most important issue facing the state in decades – natural gas drilling in the Marcellus Shale.

When one speaks violence, he degrades himself and his fellow man. When that person represents the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, he violates the fabric of our civic trust, delegitimizes the government he represents and opens the door to madness. The Corbett administration has thrown the dialogue on Marcellus drilling into the gutter and it is up to the Corbett administration to get it out.

I made the film GASLAND out of a genuine care and love for the state of Pennsylvania. The film was designed to bring to light something that we were by and large overlooking -- the extreme harm and danger of Fracking for Natural Gas, as it was taking place across the nation. To make the film, myself and a dedicated team of five people were working for no pay, day and night, without a major media company behind the film and without any assurances that anyone would see the film outside of the Delaware River basin.

The film GASLAND has been thoroughly vetted, fact checked, verified and backed up by true journalistic review and science and we stand behind it and the incredibly brave Americans in it 100%.

GASLAND has helped forge a movement in Pennsylvania, New York, and increasingly worldwide. Millions of people saw the film when it aired on HBO. In addition, I have toured to over 100 cities in the United States. Everywhere I go, I hear the complaints, concerns, outrage and dismay of the citizens facing the driller's invasion.

But instead of engaging in a real dialogue on the issues, the Pennsylvania government and the gas industry have mounted successive attacks against the honest journalism of the film. I and my team have been branded terrorists, extremists, communists, traitors, liars and now, Nazis. NAZIS!!!!!!

The state deserves better.

If the Corbett administration fails to fire Borawski and fails to begin a real assessment of the effects of gas drilling on the state, then certainly the Corbett administration has lost all credibility and legitimacy.

Does slandering a documentary filmmaker as a Nazi constitute the level of dialogue that the Corbett administration believes is good governance? Do you call someone a Nazi just because they don't agree with you?

Apparently, the whole world knows there is something terribly wrong with Hydraulic Fracturing for Natural Gas, everywhere except the dark cave of the Corbett administration. New York state has moved into a bi-partisan moratorium on fracking, Quebec has imposed a de-facto moratorium on shale drilling, the Maryland state house is on the verge of passing a similar moratorium, 20,000 protesters marched in France last week against shale drilling, Australian farmers are revolting and locking their gates against gas exploration, the New York Times reported that radioactive gas drilling waste was being dumped directly into Pennsylvania's drinking water sources, the Pulitzer Prize-winning Pro-Publica news organization reported thousands of cases of contamination across the country, CNN and 60 minutes has reported numerous case studies on families whose health have been harmed and whose water has become undrinkable due to drilling and yet there is one dark corner of the world that refuses to acknowledge the threat posed by gas drilling, the ruling party of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Is there any excuse for employing this kind of hate speech?

More disturbingly perhaps is Borawski's (and this the Corbett administration's) apparent enthusiasm for industry's projection of 130,000 to 180,000 gas wells in Pennsylvania.

By the Pennsylvania DEP's own account, one well out of 32 wells in Dimock caused an area of contamination that was nine square miles wide. From my experience and from the detailed reports of thousands of contamination cases across

the country, and the industry's own track record of failure, Dimock is no exception. What does it mean for Pennsylvania if you replicate Dimock across the state? Do the math--If you multiply this contamination rate in Dimock by 130,000 gas wells, you have contaminated 35,000 square miles, more than three quarters of the state. In other words, you have contaminated the entire area covered by the Marcellus shale. Permanently.

Calling people Nazis has no place in our civic dialogue whatsoever. What we need is a real scientific review of the harmful effects of gas drilling on the state and a statewide moratorium on new drilling, leasing, permitting and fracking until all of the problems can be addressed, not race baiting remarks.

Is it impossible to imagine that the Corbett administration could engage in a serious rational debate on the issue. Corbett could call for a substantive independent cost-benefit analysis of what this much drilling would mean to our state. Corbett could pay attention to the fact that both the U.S. Congress AND the U.S. EPA are now investigating Hydraulic Fracturing due to the massive public outcry across the nation. Could the state legislature investigate the possible collusion between the state DEP and DCNR and the gas industry?

When Pennsylvania's homeland security director James Powers was found to be responsible for the characterization of people protesting gas drilling in the state as "terrorists," he resigned under great pressure. Borawski should resign. But more importantly, Corbett should fire him. Immediately. Otherwise it is clear that Corbett condones this kind of slander, bigotry and hate.

I was born into a mixed religious family. My father is Jewish and my Italian mother was raised Roman Catholic. My father and his parents were survivors of the holocaust. Everyone in his extended family was killed by the Nazis except for his two brothers and his mother and father and a few distant cousins. He grew up with the shadow of the Nazi genocide hanging over his head for his whole life. The first place the family went after fleeing Europe just after the war, was Pittsburgh. In my family, we know what this kind of rhetoric can do, if left unchecked and unpunished.

My father, Michael Fox, was so upset at Borawski's comments that he wrote the following statement:

"When I was young I spent so many years trying to overcome the devastation of the holocaust that engulfed my mother and our home. My grandparents, my aunts and uncles and so many of my cousins perished. I was robbed of my heritage as they were robbed more cruelly of their lives. My seven year-old brother was shot and lost sight in his eye in front of me when I was two by a youth who wanted to get himself a Jew. Living with the weight of hatred that hung suspended above and through my life, I needed to know that there were indeed good people left in the world, that there was hope for kindness and justice in the future of the world. Otherwise, how could I go on? It took me such a long time and so much struggle to believe my constant mantra that the world could be good. To have my son called a Nazi after what happened to our family, and when what he did was to raise the alarm to the poisoning of our water and our people, is heart-rending and it highlights how quickly and callously some forget man's inhumanity towards man and how some resort to cruel name calling and hatred when they have no other resources to justify their untenable and greedy positions."

Since the release of GASLAND, we have been subject to many kinds of attacks, not only in writing, but in action. Our family home in Pennsylvania has been vandalized several times since the premiere of the film. Windows have been broken while I have been away touring the state, property has been looted and articles on the property have been set on fire. This kind of hateful despicable, demonizing speech can encourage the most vile impulses within people. To call my work "Nazi propaganda" is to dehumanize me and those working on the issue with great care and love for our community. I can only think that this kind of dehumanization makes us that more susceptible to attacks of every kind. No apology can make that alright.

It is up to the Corbett administration to try to put this genie back in the bottle, fire Borawski and begin to entertain a rational dialogue on the issue. If Corbett fails to dismiss Borawski and put an end to the nose dive his administration seems hell bent on, we must conclude that he condones and indeed promotes this kind of behavior. If he fails to address this, we will be forced to acknowledge that this act of thuggery, bullying and despicable insensitivity is a hallmark of his approach to those who challenge his positions

Josh Fox

GASLAND

Milanville, Pennsylvania

3/16/11